

REMARKS

I. Introduction

With the cancellation herein without prejudice of claims 16, 17 and 25, claims 18 to 24 and 26 to 31 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicant notes with appreciation the acknowledgment of the claim for foreign priority and the indication that all copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received from the International Bureau.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for considering the previously filed Information Disclosure Statement, PTO-1449 paper and cited references.

II. Claims 30 and 31

The Office Action Summary states that claims 16 to 30 are pending in the present application, and page 2 of the Office Action states that claim 30 only contains the first line. Applicant respectfully disagrees and submits herewith a complete copy of the Preliminary Amendment filed on November 1, 2001. In the Preliminary Amendment, claims 1 to 15 were canceled without prejudice, and new claims 16 to 31 were added. Applicants note that an image of the complete copy of the Preliminary Amendment filed on November 1, 2001, including the full text of claims 30 and 31, is accessible through the PAIR system.

Claim 30 has been rewritten herein in independent form to include all of the limitations of its base claim and any intervening claims. Examination of claims 30 and 31 is respectfully requested.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant notes with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter contained in claims 18 to 24 and 27 to 29. In this regard, the Examiner will note that each of claims 18, 24 and 29 has been rewritten herein in independent form to include all of the limitations of its respective base claim and any intervening claims. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 18, 24 and 29 are in condition for immediate allowance. As regards claims 19 to 23, which ultimately depend from claim 18, and claims 27 and 28, which depend from claim 24, it is

respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are also in condition for immediate allowance.

Furthermore, claim 26 has been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 18. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 26 is in condition for immediate allowance.

Claim 31 ultimately depends from claim 18 and is therefore believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

IV. Rejection of Claim 16, 17, 25 and 26 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 16, 17, 25 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over the combination of U.S. Patent No. 6,297,573 and U.S. Patent No. 4,511,827. While Applicant does not agree with the merits of this rejection, to facilitate matters, claims 16, 17 and 25 have been canceled herein without prejudice, and claim 26 has been amended herein without prejudice to depend from claim 18, which was indicated to include allowable subject matter. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that this rejection is now moot, and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

It is therefore respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable. All issues raised by the Examiner having been addressed, an early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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